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The Letter in PDF format

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## Europe as a power: now or never

Author: Jean-Paul Palomeros



In light of the war in Ukraine and all the other crises it faces, the European Union must take the risk of becoming autonomous in the areas we consider strategic, according to General Paloméros, former NATO Supreme Allied Commander Transformation.

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**Front page!** :

**European is awake, united and more valuable than ever before**



In response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine a year ago, Europeans have shown, this time, and in an emergency, real efficiency, unity and a common will that has rarely been seen before," stresses Jean-Dominique Giuliani... [Read more](#)

**Ukraine/Russia** :

**Further sanctions against Russia**



On 25 February, the Council decided to impose sanctions on 121 new individuals and entities contributing to Russia's war against Ukraine, including 18 linked to the Wagner Group. It imposed new export bans on critical technologies and industrial goods, and restrictions on the export of dual-use goods and the import of goods of particular value to Russia. It initiated proceedings to suspend two Russian-controlled media outlets... [Read more](#)

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**Declaration by the European Council**



In a declaration issued on 23 February, the members of the European Council once again denounce the Russian war of aggression and reiterate their full support for the Ukrainian people and their right to

self-determination. They reassert Ukraine's European future, 8 months after the country became a candidate for EU membership... [Read more](#)

### G7 Declaration



On 24 February, the G7 leaders met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and reiterated their support for Ukraine. They condemned Russia's illegal war and called on it to withdraw its troops. They pointed out that Russia was responsible for the damage in Ukraine and should be sanctioned, that this war was causing food difficulties for many people and that they would continue to help them... [Read more](#)

### UN General Assembly condemns Russia



On 23 February, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution calling on Russia to withdraw its military forces "immediately, completely and unconditionally from the territory of Ukraine". 141 states voted in favour of the resolution, 7 voted against. China and India abstained. On 24 February, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, called on the international community to intensify efforts to bring justice to the victims of the war in Ukraine... [Read more](#)

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### NATO Declarations



On 24 February, the North Atlantic Council reiterated its solidarity and commitment to support Ukraine "for as long as necessary". It urged Russia to stop this illegal war, recalling that the perpetrators of the crimes committed will be held accountable, and condemned, among other things, Russian energy blackmail and disinformation campaigns. On 21 February, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg hosted Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba and EU High Representative Josep Borrell to speed up production and improve arms supply systems to maintain support for Ukraine... [Read more](#)

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### Visits to Kyiv by Italian, Spanish and Polish leaders



Giorgia Meloni, President of the Italian Council, visited Kyiv on 21 February to meet Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and reiterate Italy's support for Ukraine. On 23 February, the President of the Spanish Government, Pedro Sanchez, reiterated Spain's support and raised the issue of military aid. On 24 February, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki visited the Ukrainian capital, where he announced the delivery of the first Leopard tanks by his country... [Read more](#)

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### Visit by Joe Biden



After Kyiv, US President Joe Biden travelled to Warsaw on 21 February where he gave a speech to reassert the Western coalition's support for Ukraine and NATO's ability to stand together. On 22 February, Joe Biden met with the nine leaders of NATO's eastern flank countries to assure them of the United States' commitment to the Atlantic Alliance... [Read more](#)

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### Message from the German and Polish Presidents



On 23 and 24 February, several European leaders expressed their support for Ukraine. Polish President Andrzej Duda called for a "second wave of solidarity with Ukraine" and recalled the indispensability of US military aid. German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier said Ukraine could count on Germany as "its greatest support on the European continent"... [Read more](#)

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### Measures in support for Ukraine



On 23 February, the Commission proposed to extend the suspension of import duties and trade defence measures on Ukrainian exports to the EU for another year. It also announced that 124 Ukrainian researchers will be integrated into scientific projects carried out by academic and non-academic institutions in 21 EU Member States... [Read more](#)

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### Support of European Opinion



According to a Eurobarometer published on 23 February, one year after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Europeans approve of the European Union's support for Ukraine. In particular, 91% of respondents support the provision of humanitarian aid and 77% of financial aid, while 88% are in favour of welcoming Ukrainians fleeing the war. Furthermore, 84% of respondents agree on the need to reduce European dependence on Russian gas... [Read more](#)

### Council of Europe calls for a legal response to the war



Representatives of Ukraine, Iceland and the Council of Europe, including its Secretary General, Marija Pejcinovic Buric, met on 24 February in Strasbourg. On the same day, the Committee of Ministers adopted a decision reiterating its commitment to a "strong and unequivocal" international legal response to the crimes committed by Russia... [Read more](#)

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### Commission :

#### Proposal for the protection and sustainability of marine ecosystems



On 21 February, the Commission presented measures to reduce the impact of the energy sector on marine ecosystems, with the aim of achieving a net zero emissions fisheries and aquaculture sector by 2050. In addition, a "Fisheries and Oceans Pact" to help implement the Common Fisheries Policy will be implemented... [Read more](#)

#### Proposed measures to improve connectivity



On 23 February, the Commission presented several initiatives for connectivity, with the main objective of making gigabit networks available to all European citizens and businesses by 2030. Gigabit networks are advanced transmission technologies to meet the growing demand for connectivity... [Read more](#)

#### Two years of the Recovery and Resilience Facility



On 21 February, the Commission published a review of the implementation and impact of the Recovery and Resilience Facility, an instrument of NextGenerationEU, two years after its creation. It notes that €144 billion has been disbursed so far and estimates that these investments are contributing to EU growth of around 1.5% in 2024. The Commission published on 23 February its third biannual report on debt management operations to finance the Union's borrowing and lending programmes, including those related to NextGenerationEU... [Read more](#)

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### Council :

#### Meeting of European Affairs Ministers



On 21 February, the Ministers for European Affairs prepared the European Council of 23 and 24 March, during which the Heads of State and Government will discuss support for Ukraine, strategies for competitiveness and the Union's trade policy, as well as the implementation of the conclusions on energy and migration. They took stock of the needs of Türkiye and Syria after the recent earthquakes... [Read more](#)

#### Inclusion of REPowerEU in NextGenerationEU



On 21 February, the Council approved the inclusion of the REPowerEU chapters in the Recovery and Resilience Mechanism, with a view to financing the investments and reforms needed to achieve the objectives of the Energy Plan. This will, among other things, allow Member States to secure the reduction of dependence on fossil fuels and the diversification of energy supplies, and to promote the uptake of renewable energy... [Read more](#)

#### Fight to counter violence against women



On 21 February, the Council sought Parliament's consent for the adoption of decisions on the conclusion by the Union of the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)... [Read more](#)

## Diplomacy :

### Meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers



On 20 February, Foreign Ministers discussed military support for Ukraine, work on the tenth package of sanctions against Russia and Ukraine's grain exports. They adopted new sanctions against Iran and Burma for human rights violations, and launched the EU mission to Armenia to help stabilise the border with Azerbaijan... [Read more](#)

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### Measure to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to Syria



On 23 February, in response to the humanitarian situation in Syria aggravated by the earthquake of 6 February, the Council suspended for 6 months the requirement for humanitarian organisations to apply for authorisation to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid in the country... [Read more](#)

## European Agencies :

### Nearly 1 million asylum applications in 2022



According to figures published on 22 February by the European Union Asylum Agency, the 27 Member States plus Norway and Switzerland received 966 000 asylum applications in 2022, the highest number recorded since 2016. Nearly 632,000 first instance decisions were taken by the asylum authorities of these countries, whereby 147,000 people were granted refugee status and 106,000 were granted subsidiary protection. Syrians, Afghans and Turks represented the largest groups of applicants. They come in addition to the 4 million people fleeing Ukraine who have been granted temporary protection... [Read more](#)

### Towards the entry into force of the unitary patent system



The European Patent Office has announced that the unitary patent system is expected to enter into force on 1 June 2023 following ratification by Germany, the last of the 17 participating states to do so. The system will provide uniform patent protection across the participating countries through a single patent application filed with the European Patent Office... [Read more](#)

### Formal adoption of the agreement between North Macedonia and Frontex



On 24 February, the Council formally approved the cooperation agreement between North Macedonia and Frontex, which will provide operational support to the national authorities for the management of migration flows at the borders from 1 April. The agreement also includes provisions on the protection of fundamental rights... [Read more](#)

## Cyprus :

### Cypriot leaders make contact



The President-elect of Cyprus, Nikos Christodoulides, met the leader of the northern part, Ersin Tatar, on 23 February on neutral ground in the border area controlled by the UN mission to discuss a possible resumption of talks on the reunification of the island, which has been partly occupied by Turkey since 1974... [Read more](#)

## Estonia :

### Independence Celebration



On 24 February, one year after the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg visited Tallinn to celebrate Estonia's Independence Day and reiterate their support for Ukraine... [Read more](#)

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### Polls just one week before the election



On 5 March Estonian parliamentary elections will be held to renew the 101 members of the Riigikogu. According to a poll conducted by Kantar Emor, the Reform Party of current Prime Minister Kaja Kallas (liberal, centre-right) would come out ahead of the conservative People's Party (18.2%) and the Centre Party (13.4%) with 28.7% of the vote... [Read more](#)

**Finland :****Joint statement by Finland, Norway and Sweden**

At a trilateral meeting on 22 February in Harpsund, Finland, Norway and Sweden issued a joint statement condemning the Russian invasion and confirming their support for Ukraine. The three countries also recalled that the invasion directly affects them and is the factor that led Finland and Sweden to apply for NATO membership... [Read more](#)

**France :****Opening of the Agricultural Fair**

The International Agricultural Show is taking place in Paris until 5 March. This year's theme is "Agriculture: daily life", and the show welcomes over a thousand exhibitors from 22 countries... [Read more](#)

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**Romania :****Visit by the Moldovan President**

On 23 February, Romanian President Klaus Iohannis hosted his Moldovan counterpart Maia Sandu. They made a joint statement recalling the strength of their relationship. On this occasion, the Romanian President condemned any Russian attempt to destabilise Moldova... [Read more](#)

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**Council of Europe :****Report on Lithuania**

On 23 February, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment published a report expressing concern about the prison situation in Lithuania. In particular, the Committee recommends that the Lithuanian government take the necessary measures to speed up the process of modernising its prison facilities... [Read more](#)

**Findings 2022 of the European Committee of Social Rights**

On 22 February, the European Committee of Social Rights published its 2022 findings. These are addressed to seven states that have accepted the collective complaints procedure: Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia and Sweden. They concern failures to respect the principle of gender equality, children's rights, labour rights, housing rights and access to health care, and the rights of transgender people... [Read more](#)

**G20 :****Declaration by Finance Ministers**

G20 ministers meeting in Bangalore on 24-25 February discussed the global economic situation in the context of the war in Ukraine, food security, climate action, taxation of multinationals and cryptocurrencies. China and Russia objected to the inclusion of two paragraphs on war on the first anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine... [Read more](#)

**OECD :****Competition Trends**

On 23 February, the OECD published a report on global trends in competition law, comparing jurisdictions across geographical areas, spanning seven years from 2015 to 2021... [Read more](#)

**Eurostat :****Decrease in Inflation**

According to an estimate published on 23 February by Eurostat, annual inflation in the euro area was 8.6% in January, compared with 9.2% in December, and 10% in the Union, compared with 10.4% in December.

Luxembourg and Spain recorded the lowest rate, at 5.8% and 5.9%, while Hungary had the highest rate at 26.2%... [Read more](#)

### Decline in natural gas consumption



According to a Eurostat study published on 21 February, natural gas consumption in the Union fell by 19.3% between August 2022 and January 2023, compared with the monthly averages for the same months from 2017 to 2022... [Read more](#)

## Culture :

### Cultural solidarity with Ukraine



Cultural solidarity with Ukraine continues in the EU with the launch of a European solidarity fund for Ukrainian films. This mechanism was announced by the Ministers of Culture of France, Luxembourg and Germany during the 73rd Berlin Film Festival, the Berlinale. The French minister was in Kyiv on 23 February. In addition, cultural events are being organised or have been organised throughout the EU in support of Ukraine, notably in honour of the commemoration of the first anniversary of the conflict with Russia... [Read more](#)

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### Giovanni Bellini in Paris



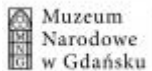
Until 17 July, the Jacquemart-André Museum in Paris is hosting an exhibition devoted to Giovanni Bellini. Some fifty works by the painter are presented in perspective with the "models" who influenced him... [Read more](#)

### Perugino in Perugia



Until 11 June, the National Gallery of Umbria in Perugia is celebrating the fifth centenary of the death of Pietro Vannucci, known as Perugino. The exhibition offers the viewer the opportunity to discover the works that marked the peak of the painter's career, such as the Crucifixion in the Chigi Chapel in Siena... [Read more](#)

### Sibylle Bergemann in Gdansk



Until 3 May, the National Museum in Gdansk is hosting an exhibition dedicated to the photographer Sibylle Bergemann. The exhibition features 133 photographs, including series from East Germany, Africa and Asia... [Read more](#)

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### Lartigue, the Hunter of Joyful Snapshots



The Canal Foundation in Madrid is hosting an exhibition devoted to the photographic work of the French artist Jacques-Henri Lartigue until 23 April. It is a lesser-known part of his work that is being honoured, with photographs aimed at capturing "happy moments", as the title of the exhibition suggests: "Lartigue, the Hunter of Joyful Snapshots"... [Read more](#)

### Acrylic Painting in Tampere



Until 21 May, the Sara Hildén Art Museum in Tampere is holding a retrospective of the work of Jukka Mäkelä. The exhibition presents a collection of the Finnish artist's work from the 1970s to the present day. His work, which consists largely of acrylic paintings, is part of Finnish postmodernism and neo-expressionism... [Read more](#)

### Exhibition "Images of Italy" in Frankfurt



Until 3 September, the Städel Museum in Frankfurt is showing a selection of 90 old photographs of Italy from the years 1850-1880. These photographs were a popular souvenir for travellers even before the invention of the postcard. The exhibition explores how these photographic views had a lasting influence on the perception of Italy throughout Europe and contributed to making it a popular travel destination... [Read more](#)

### David Hockney Exhibition in London



The Lightroom in London is hosting the exhibition "David Hockney: Bigger & Closer" until 4 June. Known for his daring use of colour and new technologies, the artist offers visitors the chance to see his work again in an immersive experience involving an ambitious digital projection and audio system... [Read more](#)

### "Swedish Ecstasy" in Brussels



Until 21 May, BOZAR Brussels is organising an immersive exhibition of Swedish art, 'Swedish Ecstasy'. For this occasion, the Palace of Fine Arts has brought together works by the country's great literary figures from the 18th to the 20th century, as well as an installation based on Hilma af Klint's vision of a temple for her most important works... [Read more](#)

### Agenda :



2 mars 2023  
Brussels  
Competitiveness Council



5 March 2023  
Estonia  
General Elections

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